USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES AND DEVELOPMENT

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Report Documentation Page

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED
30 MAR 2007	**Strategy Research Paper**	**00-00-2006 to 00-00-2007**

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE	5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
Strategic Leadership Competencies and Development	5b. GRANT NUMBER
	5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER

6. AUTHOR(S)	5d. PROJECT NUMBER
James Jenkins	5e. TASK NUMBER
	5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
U.S. Army War College,Carlisle Barracks,Carlisle,PA,17013-5050	

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
	11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for public release; distribution unlimited

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT
See attached.

15. SUBJECT TERMS

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE	**Same as Report (SAR)**	**23**	
unclassified	**unclassified**	**unclassified**			

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Lieutenant Colonel James H. Jenkins III

TITLE: Strategic Leadership Competencies and Development

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 30 March 2007   WORD COUNT: 6,700   PAGES: 23

KEY TERMS: Vision, Command Climate, Learning Organization, Systems Thinking, Jaques, SLDI, FM 22-100, FM 22-103

CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

The Army often uses the term Strategic Leadership to describe a myriad of officers and their inferred competencies. Today, it seems as important as any time since the founding of this country that the Army gets strategic leader development right. The Army must identify what competencies matter most and tackle the hard and daunting task of developing those skills in senior leaders early. Most, unfortunately, will never occupy senior leadership positions that give them the authority to exercise strategic leadership, but the institution must do all it can to build a strong foundation of officers with the potential to become strategic leaders. The Army must nourish these potential strategic leaders by developing them into strategic thinkers and encouraging them to develop strategic competencies through continued self-improvement. Strategic leaders must be visionary; they must create organizational climates that are empowering, open, and learning; and they must be systems thinkers. This project will explore what current and past Army doctrine, the Army War College Strategic Leader faculty, and other experts have to say on this topic and offer recommendations on what the Army should sustain, improve, and add to further this cause.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES AND DEVELOPMENT

Today, the world seems as complex and dynamic as it has at any time in man's history. There is little doubt amongst intellectuals and world leaders that this trend toward complexity will continue at an accelerated pace. Economic globalization, shifting demographics, and environmental changes are among factors that present extraordinary challenges to those who fill our society's senior decisionmaking roles. The leadership competencies required to meet these challenges are not necessarily new or unique, but our changing world has increased their importance. This paper will portray which competencies are most relevant and required for strategic leaders of the future to be successful, and in doing so, will show which leadership characteristics best define effective leaders. It will also prove why some competencies trump others in importance. Additionally, it will examine what the Army has done and is doing to bridge the gap between ineffective and effective leadership while offering ideas about methods the Army can use to sustain what's good and improve upon areas that are either lacking or absent.

Many have heard the saying anyone can be a father, but it takes someone special to be a dad. Some take the same approach to leadership. The Army can put anyone into a leadership position, but it takes someone special to be a leader -- and it takes someone exceptional to be a strategic leader. Henceforth in this paper, when the term "leader" or "strategic leader" is used to describe individuals, it will infer they are good at it unless otherwise noted. As an example, people refer to others as their leaders only when it connotates a positive impression. There are instances where people use sarcasm or voice inflection when saying someone is their leader, but in general, people use the word "leader" for their superior sparingly and with pride.

Before beginning this discussion, one must discern the differences between strategic, operational, and tactical levels, because these differences directly relate to the leadership competencies required at those levels. One way to look at these differences is by determining how the level relates to others in the system. The other method is by defining what responsibilities that level has in terms of time and demand as it relates to others within it.

The Australian Department of Defence best explains the levels of leadership as it relates to the military and presents the simplest yet most direct and comprehensible descriptions of these terms. According to the Australian Department of Defence, the strategic level involves decisions made at the governmental or highest levels of subordinate elements of government, such as the military, that govern or determine which instruments of power are used and how they are used. The military strategic level incorporates how the nation uses the armed forces to

meet the political objectives or national policy aims at war and peace. The operational level links military strategy to tactics. It coordinates the activities in a theater, usually as part of a campaign plan. Tactical level forces confront the enemy. It is here organizations and units maneuver to engage the enemy in combat.[1] In its simplest form tactical looks inside its unit and at the immediate future. Operational splits its time looking inside and laterally into the near future, while strategic looks almost entirely outside of itself, up, and into the distant future.

Time is another way to look at these different levels. Elliott Jaques' thirty-five years of research,[2] led him to perceive that the key distinguishing factor that best defines the level of someone within a hierarchy directly relates to the time it takes that individual to complete their longest lasting task. He called this the "target completion time of the longest tasks."[3] He found that people with the same time span of projects felt very similar levels of responsibility, stress, and demand, and that they expected similar compensation regardless of the number of subordinates. These levels are also measurable, and they reflect some universal truth about human nature. The levels fell into groups annotated in the chart below Figure 1. The third column describes a simplistic, yet logical inferred relationship between tactical, organizational, and strategic levels.

Pay Grades	Time	Level
1	1 day	Tactical
2	3 months	Tactical
3	1 year	Tactical
4	2 years	Operational
5	5 years	Operational
6	10 years	Strategic
7	20 years	Strategic

Figure 1. Hierarchy Levels[4]

There is an implication here that leaders must have authority to function in the capacity of one of these levels. If one is not in a position to make decisions, they are, in essence, in a support role; their function is to support someone who can make decisions at that level.

> The reality is that only one or two percent will ever attain strategic Leadership rank or position. But anyone in a staff position working for a strategic leader should be well-trained as a strategic thinker or they can not adequately support the leader.[5]

This distinction makes strategic leadership study relevant to all and even more imperative for the future success of our Army and Nation. The Army must also make this distinction, and it must train all potential leaders to be thinkers first.

Although many books, manuals, and articles address leadership competencies, most are very similar, and almost all are entirely industry-focused. The United States Army has published

three manuals in the past twenty years on leadership and a variety of articles scattered throughout widely distributed publications. The Armed Forces also incorporates leadership training into its various schools, but very few dedicate time and resources to the study of strategic leadership outside the Senior Service Schools. Although each service school provides some leadership training and development guidance for leaders at various levels, no consistent theme resides among them. In the end, individuals must decide which competencies are most important to develop and determine the best methods to acquire them.

Department of the Army Field Manual 22-100, *Military Leadership*, dated August 1999, continues a long tradition of defining leaders in terms of 'Be, Know, Do.' The manual says, without regards to levels, "BE, KNOW, DO clearly and concisely states the characteristics of an Army leader."[6] Being is about knowing yourself, how you display your values and attributes, and the example you set. Knowing involves the skills required to be a leader, such as technical and tactical competency, while doing is about influencing, operating, and improving.[7] These are much more generalized definitions, but the point is effective leaders at any level must be proficient at these to be successful.

The manual dedicates its last chapter to strategic leadership, and it begins with what is probably the quote most often used at the in beginning of any education process related to strategic leadership. General of the Army George C. Marshall is reported to have said shortly after becoming the Chief of Staff of the United States Army just before World War II:

> It became clear to me at the age of 58 I would have to learn new tricks that were not taught in military manuals or on the battlefield. In this position I am a political soldier and will have to put my training in rapping-out-orders and making snap decisions on the back burner, and have to learn the arts of persuasion and guile. I must become an expert in a whole new set of skills.[8]

The chapter describes the skills and traits of strategic leaders in a fashion of what's new, different, or additive to lower forms of leadership. It highlights three primary skills required at the strategic leader level: Interpersonal, Conceptual, and Technical. 'Developing a Frame of Reference' is a key competency required in a subcategory under the Conceptual Skill area. The field manual states, "Strategic Leaders are open to new experiences and to comments from others, including subordinates. Strategic Leaders are reflective, thoughtful, and unafraid to rethink past experiences and to learn from them."[9] This highlights a critical component of what learning organizations encompass and what type of leader is required. This seems particularly relevant today, maybe more so than in the past, due the unique, globally connected, and quickly changing environment in which we live. Many leaders' experiences are now truly dated, and although the lessons learned are extremely relevant and many are probably timeless, changing

conditions force leaders to rethink what they have learned contemplating application of old lessons to new situations. Later the field manual says strategic leaders are cognizant of relationships among systems.[10] It hints at systems thinking, but unfortunately prefaces this with the implication that this knowledge skill is internal only. What is missing in both descriptions is the "how." How does one learn to attain the frames of references necessary to make these leaps in judgment and foresight? The manual, however, is the first to address adequately the visionary timeframe required of a leader at the strategic level by stating they must "remain focused on their responsibilities to shape an organization or policies to perform successfully over the next 10-20 years." This corresponds well with Jaques' hierarchies and the leader stratification depicted in Figure 1 earlier.

The manual dedicates second section of the chapter to the action a strategic leader must take. First and foremost is vision. The manual concisely describes the aspects of vision by beginning with the statement, "[F]orming a vision is pointless unless the leader shares it with a broad audience, gains widespread support, and uses it as a compass to guide the organization."[11] General Gordon Sullivan, the Army Chief of Staff in the early 1990's, expressed this concept best when he said:

> Once a vision has been articulated and the process of buy-in has begun, the vision must be continually interpreted. In some case, the vision may be immediately understandable at every level. In other cases, it must be translated – put into more appropriate language – for each part of the organization. In still other cases, it may be possible to find symbols that come to represent the vision.[12]

The dilemma that faces military organizations, though, is the potential disconnect between buy-in and loyalty. All organizations strive to instill loyalty in some form at every organizational level, but the complete willingness to follow orders — mostly without question — is unique to the military. A failure to disobey orders can produce such disastrous results that courts martial habitually attach charges of dereliction of duty to charges of willfully disobeying a lawful order. Obedience becomes synonymous with loyalty and, in combination, they become synonymous with duty. The danger in this is that orders blindly followed can also produce disastrous results. Subordinate leaders have a duty to question — even challenge — orders or guidance they have reason to believe might produce disastrous results. The Army's latest vision statement, articulated as the Army Forces Generation Model, is a perfect example of a fatal disconnect between buy-in and obedience. Few leaders truly understand the Army's newly devised process for force generation and it deep implications and effects, and even fewer think it will work. Whether it will work or fail is unimportant to the purposes of this paper; what is important

is that there is little debate where there should be tremendous debate. Many leaders express their frustration in private or anonymous settings, but may fell obligated to carry out the order due to the nature of military command or more importantly the current command climate at the highest echelons of the Army and Department of Defense. [13] This dilemma can actually hinder successful vision implementation and it causes many to wait out their leader's tour. Rather than question orders, they simply "click their heels" and carry on, knowing that passing the guidon at the next change of command ceremony will spare them the consequences.[14]   The manual highlights this tenure issue in a way it probably did not intend to do so. Written in 1999, it said:

> Today given the rapid growth of technology, unpredictable threats, and newly emerging roles, Army leaders can't cling to new hardware as the key to the Army's vision. Instead today's strategic leaders emphasize the Army's core strength…the American soldier.[15]

No manual should constrain vision or even say one is better than another unless this is proven through historical analysis; rather the manual should promote and teach the fundamentals of vision development and communication lest it direct future leaders down an unintended path. The manual could have addressed the tenure issue better by briefly describing the overall vision of past strategic leaders of the services and senior commanders and using these vignettes as textual evidence of well-executed or even failed vision as they apply to the skills necessary to develop and implement one's vision.

Another category described involves improving actions taken by strategic leaders. It is here the manual first mentions creating learning environments as a goal of strategic leaders. Unfortunately, it ends discussion on this topic one sentence later by saying, "One technique for the Army as a learning institution is to decentralize the learning and other improving actions to some extent."[16] This shows Army in 1999, lacked of depth of perception, knowledge, and understanding of how to pursue this worthy goal. Following this theme, the manual attempts to tie leader development to improving organizations. Although mentoring should not be limited to the strategic leadership level, the Army insinuates this by stating, "Since few formal leader development programs exist beyond senior service colleges, strategic leaders pay special attention to their subordinates' self-development showing them what to study, where to focus, whom to watch, and how to proceed."[17] Stated here too is that strategic leaders give the "right" people the intellectual boost necessary to aid their quick development. These wordings can illicit strong negative connotations if some equate mentoring with sponsoring - pulling someone along rather than motivating and teaching them.

In general, this manual is not a 'how to' but a 'what' description of leadership at various levels. This is of course important, but can be of little use to those self-aware enough to identify

their own personal weaknesses, and who are seeking methods and techniques to improve upon those areas. With little guidance, military personnel must once again turn to corporate literature as their genre for self-improvement advice.

An older yet more focused manual is FM 22-103, *Leadership and Command at Senior Levels.* FM 22-103 is much more insightful than FM 22-100 and provides more substance on the unique differences and competencies among leaders of various levels. Then Chief of Staff of the Army, General John A. Wickham, said this manual's purpose is to bridge the gap from direct to indirect leadership and focus on tactical and operational levels of very large units. He said it is an "instructional text for developing professionals aspiring to leadership and command at senior levels."[18] This manual states senior leaders should possess three special characteristics: the ability to rapidly access situations and form battlefield vision, a high tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty, and the capacity to learn rapidly.

FM 22-103 centers around vision and the actions and skills leaders need to achieve that vision. Senior leaders need many attributes to properly develop and instill vision. Although the manual superbly describes the process of vision development and implementation, of concern is the statement that leaders must 'tough enough' to ensure their vision is executed. One implication of this is that if you are not strong enough to force an unpopular or unsupported vision, subordinates may wait out the tenure of the senior leaders.

Of note, leaders at this level must still be learners themselves and have a well-developed historical perspective.   This background should allow them to see the critical "principles, relationships, patterns," and then apply this to problems of today.[19] They must also be operationally sound. Interestingly, a subset of this section asserts senior leaders must be totally familiar with the "capabilities of men." This implies, or should imply, the Army should place more emphasis on the study of psychology and culture, although this manual allots no attention to this. There are also some imperatives discussed for senior leaders to implement their vision. Critical to this endeavor, leaders must "sustain [or create] a positive and progressive command climate."[20] Senior leaders have a responsibility to reconcile organizational capabilities against requirements established by their vision and ensure they match. Implementation becomes essential to the leaders' effectiveness and credibility. The manual clearly states leaders who espouse the "doing more with less" philosophy diminish their effectiveness. This seems to particularly contrast with leaders and trends most have observed in the past decade.

Chapter four speaks directly to the skills required of a strategic leader. Noted British commander General Sir Archibald Wavell observed in *Generals and Generalship*:

> The many and contrasted qualities that a general must have rightly gives an impression of the great field of activity that generalship covers and the variety of the situations in which it has to deal, and the need for adaptability in the make-up of a general.[21]

This highlights the vast array of skills required by the most senior leaders, and the manual carves out the most prominent skills. It immediately infers that good strategic leaders must develop learning organizations, if only to help overcome the leader's personal skill deficiencies. The hallmark of any good leader, and particularly a strategic leader, is that they recognize their weaknesses and make adjustments. Although the list is somewhat long, a few professional skills stand out above others. First, one must be able to make timely, clear, and consistent decisions that synthesize and analyze the facts and complexities of the situation. This is based on many traits but highlighted in the text are creativity and intuition. The manual states one can learn these, but it stops short by simply stating one learns these critical traits through study and concentration. It leaves the reader asking, what should they study? What effective concentration methods and techniques have past successful strategic leaders used?

The competency skills mentioned are perspective, endurance, risk taking, coordination, and assessment. "Competency skills can and must be developed and practiced long before leaders assume positions of senior responsibility."[22] Clearly, the learning starts early and, in a perfect world, never ends. Yet except for Senior Service Schools, the military offers little to support the academic development of senior officers: "Those who lack appropriate perspective skills typically pursue short-term goals without regard to long-term consequences. They emphasize form over substance."[23] One of these skills – persuasion – highlights this concept. Strategic leaders must be able to persuade those with and external to the organization that their vision, direction, and decisions are correct. Not mentioned in the text, but important to consider, is how deeply within the organization one should personally persuade. If the strategic leader stops at the general officers below him or her, they run the risk of falling into the potentially fatal trap of engaging the "yes-man" mentality. Once again this manual, as others, begs the question of how to learn these traits. Listing them is definitely important and this manual's vignettes are well representative of the authors' points, but doctrine needs to place more emphasis on 'how.'

Chapters five and six expertly discuss command processes and the organization. Of note is, "One cannot assume that good leadership and successful organizational performance are always one and the same."[24] This concept is woven throughout these two chapters as a juxtaposition of what a leader must be and how he or she should synchronize command, management, and leadership in building their organizations. The most appropriate quote that encapsulates this concept is:

> [Senior Leaders] <u>communicate their intent and provide direction</u> so that others can understand and respond. Next, they <u>establish structure</u> to focus the effort. Then they <u>plan and organize</u> the activities necessary to get results. Finally, they <u>motivate and influence</u> to develop and sustain the organizational purpose required to accomplish the mission.[25]

Two traits stand out in building and maintaining organizations: reflection and command climates. Where present-day leaders are concerned, reflection seems almost a lost art or seldom considered craft, but the manual maintains it is one of the most important activities leaders must take time to do. The military leaders most publicized today seem to epitomize the work-alcoholic, time frenzied task-master who uses the war as the excuse to leave little to no time for activities other than those dedicated specifically to today's tasks. FM 22-103 gives excellent examples though of past strategic leaders who set a very different example. Field General Montgomery believed senior leaders should allow time every day for reflection and quite thought, and he habitually went to bed at 2130 even during battle. MacArthur, as Superintendent of West Point, usually worked at his home office until noon to defer distractions. General Marshall, as Army Chief of Staff during World War II, usually left his office at 1500 and rarely made important decisions after then.[26] Napoleon, noted to sleep but four hours a day, still found time to reflect. He said:

> If I always appear prepared, it is because before entering on an undertaking, I have meditated for long and have foreseen what may occur. It is not genius which reveals to me suddenly and secretly what I should do in circumstances unexpected by others; it is thought and meditation.[27]

The second trait prominently discussed is command climate. The climate is the perception of what life is like in the unit. This perception is the subordinates' understanding of how their superiors will treat them in the unit and whether the leadership cares about them both personally and professionally. Leaders' behavior is more important than their words. As an example, recently a battalion commander at Fort Bliss, Texas, decided not to publish any policy letters during his tenure. His intent was to prove that policy letters were unnecessary in units with open communications and clear standards for Soldier treatment and training. His battalion led the post in every category of reenlistment, one indicator of climate, for his two years of command. Unfortunately, FM 22-103, like other manuals, spends little time on this subject; it defines what the climate should be but gives no guidance on how to accomplish that goal.

As with FM 22-100, FM 22-103 falls into the familiar trap of describing more about the 'what' a strategic leader should be and look like versus 'how' they are to develop the necessary skills. This field manual dedicates a one-page appendix to professional development; the other ninety-nine pages merely discuss leadership characteristics. The appendix, though, is a step in

the right direction. It aptly says the Army should develop aspiring strategic leaders through senior schools, unit development programs, and individual dual effort. FM 22-103 further provides relevant and applicable vignettes to support the messages and points in the text.

The Strategic Leadership Primer used at the Army War College is the Army's latest document on strategic leadership. It superbly fuses the points of the previous two field manuals with some focus on the ever-expending diversity of skills required of people in today's strategic environment. It recognizes that few will actually hold strategic leadership positions, but many will aid those leaders and thus must understand and be coherent and learned in the craft of strategic leadership. The Army War College frequently proclaims its mission is training the nation's future strategic leaders, but in reality, the institution is training the vast majority of students to be strategic thinkers.

The Army War Colleges uses this primer as the core text to teach students their Strategic Leadership Course. For academic year 2007, the college taught this course 27 September – 17 October 2006. The after-action review taken by 72 percent of the students, gave some valuable insight into what to sustain and improve in educating strategic leaders and thinkers. The vast majority of students, 92 percent, were satisfied with the course and nearly all recommended continuing to teach this block of instruction.[28] The Strategic Leadership Course objectives primarily focused on helping students comprehend the unique aspects of leadership required at the strategic level, evaluate the climate and culture of organizations, develop strategic vision, and lead change.

The report itself is thirty-six pages long and consists mostly of student quotes, but a few themes are repetitive. First, most students felt the course was the best on leadership they had experienced in twenty-plus years of military education. All felt better prepared to enter the strategic environment, and one student said the course was "the most informative and practical course I have had in the Army."[29] Many, however, felt there was some room for improvement in four areas: time, readings, focus, and case studies. Quite a few felt "The amount of time given to this course was not sufficient."[30] If the ultimate goal of the college is to train students in the craft of strategic leadership, then the school should spend more time on the primary core course dedicated to this endeavor. Another said, "This course needs more time allocated to it. [Three] weeks is not long enough,"[31] while another seemed to sum up many of the statements with, "The amount of time given to this course is not sufficient. The development of the strategic leader is a primary purpose for this school, yet strategic leadership is crammed into a [three] week block, while theory of war is given [five] weeks???."[32]

Another area of concern was the reading associated with each lesson. Although the readings received favorable ratings overall, some felt the selected readings were too academic or business related. One said, "The texts did not really get to strategic leadership competencies. Some of the readings were old research...."[33] Some felt, "far too much reading from the world of corporate management."[34] Others took a more specific look. As one student noted, "The readings on ethics were poor. The Army War College should have required us to read excerpts from classics (and classic philosophers) on morals, ethics, and integrity. Our instructor though, (GK Cunningham) did an excellent job bringing us to that point."[35] The positive trend as noted by this student and countless others was that many instructors effectively complemented the readings and curriculum guide, and students mentioned instructor's names throughout the survey as adding immensely to their learning.

Focus was the third area of concern, and case studies were the fourth. Numerous students' comments linked these two areas. Many felt the emphasis of reading material and content came from the corporate world, which can conflict with military applications. One said, "Too many 'business' models of strategic leadership, at the expense of military examples."[36] Another noted, "The requirement to use course materials (primarily civilian business models of leadership) to justify a philosophy of military leadership was a bit like the proverbial square peg and round hole."[37] This related directly to what many expressed as a desire to see more military case studies and examples of strategic leadership in action. One said, "Would like to see more military/senior government examples of strategic leadership than business examples."[38] This dilemma is not new and many have expressed frustration with this teaching method. One faculty instructor, Colonel Jiyul Kim, summed this dilemma up superbly:

> I have long felt that the almost wholesale application of business management theory for public service in general and the military in particular has often misled us. The problem is the fundamental difference in the core motivating force between business and public service: material profit vs. common good. Business leadership is more internally oriented than external precisely because of the need for profit and to satisfy stock holders. National security at the strategic level is almost always more about the external dimension than the internal which is left to lower levels.[39]

These statements are in no way an indictment of the Army War College's curriculum. As stated earlier, the vast majority of students felt the course was superb; however, our military still has room to improve as it develops military strategic leaders. Examining course after-action reports in detail can help the military make the right course corrections.

A robust study done in the 1970's by the U.S. Army Research Institute, the U.S. Army War College, and the Industrial Collage of the Armed Forces formed the basis of the Strategic

Leader Develop Inventory (SLDI). This study further codified elements of leadership that are unique to the strategic level.[40] The Army War College imbeds these principles in the Strategic Leadership Primer, a key document used at the Army War College, and amongst senior leaders throughout the government to discern strategic level competencies. However, many of the traits in the latest edition of this manual's comprehensive list are universal to all leaders, as are those lists in previously mentioned field manuals. They apply at all levels of leadership. A few traits, however, are truly linked to strategic leaders and their required and unique competencies.[41] This is not to say operational and tactical leaders have limits on their leadership, but that in general, these characteristics separate strategic leaders from others. The chart below depicts all of the traits and qualities in the three manuals. Highlighted are those that are most redundant and seem most appropriate to the strategic level.

FM 22-100	FM 22-103	AWC Strategic Leadership Primer
STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP SKILLS	**Components of Vision**	**Be**
Interpersonal Skills	**Attributes** (Standard Bearer, Developer, Integrator)	The Values Champion
Communication	**Perspectives** (Historical, Operational, Organizational)	Master of Strategic Art
Using Dialogue	**Imperatives** (Purpose, Direction, Motivation, Ethics, Role Models, Promote Ethical Development, Develop and Sustain Ethical Climate)	Quintesennential Student of History
Negotiating	**Moral Toughness**	Comfortable with Complexity
Achieving Consensus	Strength	High Personal Stamina
Building Staff	Confidence	Skilled Diplomat
Conceptual Skills	Consistency	Possess Intellectual Sophistication
Envisioning	**Professional Skills**	**Know**
Developing Frames of Reference	Conceptual (Decision Making, Forecasting, Creativity, Intuition)	**Conceptual**
Dealing with Uncertainty and Ambiguity	Competency (Perspective, Endurance, Risk Taking, Coordination, Assessment)	Envisioning
Technical Skills	Communications (Interpersonal, Listening, Language, Teaching, Persuasion)	Frame of Reference Development
Strategic Art	**Command Processes**	Problem Management
Leveraging Technology	Command	Critical Self-Examination
Translating Political Goals into Military Objectives	Control	Critical, Reflective Thought
STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP ACTIONS	Leadership and Management	Effective within Environ of Complexity
Influencing Actions	**Organization**	Skillful Formulation of Ends, Ways, Means
Communication (Communicating a Vision, Telling the Army Story)	Adaptive	**Interpersonal**
Strategic Decision Making	Cohesive	Communication
Motivating (Shaping Culture, Culture and Values, Culture and Leadership)	Resilient	Inspires Others to Act
Operating Actions	**Components**	Organizational Representation
Strategic Planning	**The Structure** (Formal and Informal)	Skillful Coordination of Ends, Ways, Means
Executing	**The Led**	Master of Command and Peer Leadership
- Allocating resources	Training	**Technical**
- Managing Joint, Interagency, and Multinational Relationships	Identity	Systems Understanding
- Military Actions Across the Spectrum	Personal Soldier Factors	Recognizes and Understands Interdependencies
Strategic Assessing	Commitment	Info-age Technological Awareness
Improving Actions	**The Leaders**	Skillful Application of Ends, Ways, Means
Developing (Mentoring, Developing Intellectual Capital)	Game Plan	**Do**
Building (Building Amid Change, Leading Change)	Standard Rules	Provide for the Future
Learning	Priorities and Objectives	Initiate of Policy and Directive
	Reflect	Shape the Culture
	Personal Leader Factors	Teach and Mentor the Strategic Art
	Building Teams	Manage Joint/Combined and Interagency Relationships
	Setting the Stage	Manage National-Level Relationships

Figure 2: Manuals' Leadership Competencies

Reviewing all of the lists in these manuals reveals that a few competencies repeated consistently and these traits appear crucial and unique to strategic leaders. Strategic leaders must be visionary; they must create organizational climates that are empowering, open, and learning; and they need to be systems thinkers. Effective strategic leaders must view

themselves clearly and their organization as it relates to others above and around it far into the future. They must be able to see the changes required and the path to get there while understanding the dynamics of systems and seeing the second-, third-, fourth-, and even fifth-order effects. They must create organizational climates conducive to learning, sharing, and team building, which in turn foster creativity and ingenuity.   It is here, examining these three critical and primary traits of strategic leaders, where philosophers, psychologists, and other experts can be of value in teaching the "how" part of learning to become strategic leaders. The geniuses amongst these researchers can even add some of the missing pieces that, while not mentioned in the manuals, are of critical importance at the strategic level.

Foremost to strategic leadership is vision. This is more applicable today than perhaps at any point in our history, because change has become virtually essential to outdistancing the competition the competition and remaining relevant in a globally connected, exponentially-rising technological world. Leaders at this level must possess the ability to envision their organization ten to twenty years into the future, and they must have the skills to get their bosses and peers[42] to agree and their subordinates to follow.   Envisioning an unknown future is, in itself, a challenging and daunting task. Countless forces are shaping the future every minute, and individual actions may directly and indirectly alter the path. Visionaries, though, look carefully for indicators of future realities and use history as a tool in looking for similar indicators under similar circumstances. Those leaders who ignore the future or fail to guess well will be overtaken by it. A strategic leader's "mind must be permanently armed with new information and reevaluation,"[43] to have a fighting chance at guessing well and with intelligence.

On a more positive note, effective and well trained strategic leaders can and do visionary thinking regularly. John Kotter, in his book *Leading Change*, describes the six characteristics of an effective vision as imaginable, desirable, feasible, focused, flexible, and communicable. To expand on these six elements, vision must convey a picture to others of what the future looks like. It must appeal to the long term interest of employees, customers, stock holders, and bosses. The organization must be able to realistically attain the vision, and the vision must be clear enough to provide guidance for decisions while allowing individuals to exercise initiative and adapt alternative approaches to reaching the goal. Finally, it must be easy to communicate, preferably in less than five minutes.[44] Getting to the vision is in many respects harder than coming up with a viable one in the first place.

Elliot Jaques, mentioned earlier in his Stratified Systems Theory, contents that a person's level of sophistication and how they see and approach problems can determine which level they

are at and may hope to achieve.[45]   There is, however, another competency strategic leader's need that assists in both the development and achievement of the vision.

Organizational or command climate is the most essential of the characteristics that assist and support strategic leaders. They must create this environment or are destined to fail either themselves or worse, their organizations. Today's world and environment are volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. So how can any one person operate in such a place? He or she can not, and more importantly should not, operate alone if they care more for their organization and its success than they do for their own personal gain.[46] Effective strategic leaders need not be level four to five leaders (the two highest types of leaders prescribed by Cotter and John C. Maxwell), but in this rapidly changing and expanding environment, they must adhere to at least one of the tenets for the highest level of leadership attainable for the organization to ultimately succeed. They must subvert their personal glory for those they lead. Jim Collins said it best:

> Level 5 leaders [highest on his scale] channel their ego needs away from themselves and into the larger goal of building a great company. It's not that Level 5 leaders have no ego or self interest. Indeed, they are incredibly ambitious – but their ambition is first and foremost for the institution, not themselves.[47]

Robert Kegan further supports this by work done in his theory called *Stage Theory*. The Army integrated Kegan's work into the Strategic Leader Develop Inventory (SLDI) mentioned earlier. It prescribes four levels of maturity in adults. Self-centered level one individuals progress to level four leaders who possess an internal set of values and independent frame of reference (they do not rely on others' opinions of them to shape their actions). The level four leader no longer cares for his or her self gratification and promotion and can subordinate their self-interest for the better good of the organization.[48]

This climate must be open and sharing not because it sounds good, but because it is essential today more than ever due to the complex environment. As stated earlier, strategic leaders' most important skill is vision, and leaders enable their vision by creating an environment that allows people to help the leader develop the vision, making it a shared vision, and then attain the vision. The environment at this level must be empowering and allow open dialogue. This is essential, not only to aid the leader in attaining a more shared vision, which correlates with Kotter's second vision characteristic, *desirable,* but this type of environment also allows an organization to learn. The challenge is that a shared vision is not necessarily required for a smaller organization to be tactically, or at times, operationally effective. A strong willed leader can force the unit to mission accomplishment without regard to the effects on its people,

and higher authorities may such a leader as successful.[49] There are few checks and balances in the Army structure to watch or even consider climate as a measure of leadership potential. The Army continues to explore the utility of 360-degree assessments, but to date these usually take place in school environments the results are kept private. Unless checks and balances exist for a formal review of leaders, or the Army discovers another unique manner to enforce this critical competency, there is no sure method to make command environment a commanders' priority. Most tactical leaders follow other tactical leaders, and all have mission accomplishment as their goal. Mission accomplishment and daily tasks can easily sweep these leaders to think only about tactical and operational imperatives. Strategic leaders, though, must change this if they intend to groom better and more capable strategic leaders and thinkers. One cannot expect a leader to suddenly see the merits of climate in terms of empowerment, dialogue, and learning once they have reached the pinnacle of their profession without first learning methods to develop and instill this into their earlier organizations.[50] The key component here is learning. It is critical the services and their organizations learn if they expect to emerge successfully from today's challenges and are prepared for tomorrow's challenges. This is the topic of Peter Senge's book, *The Fifth Discipline.* He does not say outright that organizations must be learning in order to survive; instead, he shows how to build a learning organization and what it can do.[51] The choice though is obvious – learn or die.

Not surprisingly, the fifth discipline Senge advocates is systems thinking. A systems thinker first understands that all things are invariably related to each other. This is the key component that ties vision and environment together. Each entity is a system and is part of another system and has sub- and supra-systems in and around it. In other words, actions in one area will have effects in countless others, and they in turn will have more effects on others or even the initial area affected. A systems thinker looks for these effects. The Strategic Leadership Primer, perhaps unintentionally, describes systems thinking when it stated strategic leaders need to possess "intellectual sophistication – alternative frames of reference, pattern recognition, and [is] able to see second, third, and fourth – order effects."[52] This sophistication infers learning. Strategic leaders are always trying to learn more about themselves, their environment, and interrelationships. Colonel Kim gave a superb example of this as it relates to culture:

> The business world's approach is on individual behavior in dealing with individuals in other cultures – the list of do's and don'ts that we often see. This is important for national security strategic leaders as well, but perhaps even more critical is a broader understanding of the other culture that is necessary to formulate policy & strategy, i.e. the ideologies, values, perception, etc. that constitute the "other." American strategic leaders in particular, because of

America's unique place and role in the world and rising anti-Americanism, require a level of competence in this area that is uniquely different and more challenging than perhaps any other country in the world. The American strategic military leader, because of the military's uniquely expansive position and role in the US national security structure argues for an even greater need in this area.[53]

Understanding cultures is becoming more and more important for successful strategic leaders. Richard Lewis also tied these concepts together well when he said, "If you are able to see yourself and your culture from the outside and think more objectively as a consequence, you will have a good chance of clearing away certain cultural barriers that have impeded access to others' thoughts or personalities."[54] Strategic leaders must understand this concept much more so in the future than they have in the past, because once again, global connectedness forces interrelationships, and decisions at strategic levels now cross unseen global boundaries with disquieting regularity.

Unfortunately, the Army's method of cultural training has consisted of one set of PowerPoint slides for all leaders and Soldiers just before they board a plane destined for that culture. The services have done better at ensuring this happens and realizing its importance, but leaders need a more robust and intense level of training to be successful. Schools are best suited to start this process of teaching about various cultures all can expect to encounter, but units must continue the training and integrate it into their collective training events. Similar to arguments stated earlier, strategic leaders cannot start seeing its importance when the Army thrusts them into a strategic leadership position. It is about learning – continuous learning. System thinking ties this together for the strategic leader. They see that such things as culture, technology, weather, languages, terrain, politics, space, economics, etc. as all interrelated.

There are, of course, other leadership competencies important to strategic leaders, but most are nearly as important to operational and tactical leaders. Vision, climate, and system thinking are the three traits that separating strategic leaders from the pack. These are the key ingredients, and the Army has work to do if it expects to change the widespread perception that leaders can be made and are not just born.

Endnotes

[1] Australian Department of Defence, "Military Operations Index," available from http://www.defence.gov.au/Raaf/organisation/info_on/operations/commands.htm; Internet; accessed 14 October 2006. Searches through various Army Field manual and business books did not yield a simpler definition of these terms. Many manuals also had lengthy and cumbersome definitions and used the word itself often times inside the definition.

² Jaques is a Canadian born psychoanalyst with a medical degree from John Hopkins and PhD in Social Relations from Harvard. He developed a theory he called Stratified Systems Theory. It directly linked to what others call vision, but he quantified it and developed methods to measure a person's abilities in this area.

³ Elliott Jaques, "In Praise of Hierarchy," in (Classics of Organizational Theory) 6th ed., eds. Jay M. Shafritz, J. Steven Ott, and Yong Suk Jang, (Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005), 235.

⁴ Jaques, 236.

⁵ Stephen A. Shambach, COL, ed, *Strategic Leadership Primer*, 2nd ed (Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2004), 2-3.

⁶ U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, Field Manual 22-100 (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, August 1999), 1-6.

⁷ FM 22-100, 1-4 – 1-10.

⁸ FM 22-100, 7-1. (It has been challenging to find recent quotes from current and recent leaders in strategic positions that relates to their strategic specific learning or gaps in their experiences or education. This may be historically common since it is only now that the senior leaders of the last two decades shave probably started to reflect upon their experiences and draw conclusions.)

⁹ FM 22-100, 7-8.

¹⁰ FM 22-100, 7-8 – 7-9.

¹¹ FM 22-100, 7-14.

¹² FM 22-100, 7-14.

¹³ The author's participation at senior level meetings in Army G1 and Forces Command Headquarters have exemplified this. The Chief gave Forces Command the task to determine how to implement this plan, and asked the Army G1, in a support role, to determine the personnel sustainment requirements. Numerous officers at nearly all ranks have voiced frustrations with trying to implement this extremely complex plan, under war conditions, without higher authorities first adequately persuading them of its merits. It is a plan of managing fewer resources for the same set of mission requirements with attempted predictability.

¹⁴ Blair Case and Lisa Henry, email message to author, 25 March 2007. Blair and Lisa helped the author edit this paper and crafted this paragraph for better understanding.

¹⁵ FM 22-100, 7-15.

¹⁶ FM 22-100, 7-22.

¹⁷ FM 22-100, 7-23 (The quote goes on to describe specifically what the strategic leader should do, "showing them what to study, where to focus, whom to watch, and how to proceed.").

[18] U.S. Department of the Army, *Leadership and Command at Senior Levels*, Field Manual 22-103 (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, June 1987), i.

[19] FM 22-103, 11.

[20] FM 22-103, 14.

[21] FM 22-103, 27.

[22] FM 22-103, 31.

[23] FM22-103, 32.

[24] FM 22-103, 44.

[25] FM 22-103, 45 (Underline added for emphasis and matches the bold print from the manual. This summarized the concepts of this chapter and previous one about the essence of senior leadership).

[26] FM 22-103, 59.

[27] FM 22-103, 59.

[28] Office of Institutional Assessment, "Strategic Leadership Report: AY07," available from http://cbnet/surveys/index.htm; U.S. Army War College Portal dated December 2006, 1.

[29] "Strategic Leadership Report: AY07," 8.

[30] "Strategic Leadership Report: AY07," 11.

[31] "Strategic Leadership Report: AY07," 28.

[32] "Strategic Leadership Report: AY07," 11.

[33] "Strategic Leadership Report: AY07," 13.

[34] "Strategic Leadership Report: AY07," 16.

[35] "Strategic Leadership Report: AY07," 19.

[36] "Strategic Leadership Report: AY07," 14.

[37] "Strategic Leadership Report: AY07," 21.

[38] "Strategic Leadership Report: AY07," 26.

[39] Colonel Jiyul Kim, e-mail message to author, 19 October 2006.

[40] T. Owen Jacobs, *A Guide to the Strategic Leader Development Inventory*, 2nd Revision (Carlisle Barracks, PA 1998), 1-21.

41 Shambach, 56-57.

42 Peers is unique to Strategic Leadership. At lower echelons leaders only consider peers in reference to competing for resources or supporting attack, but at the strategic level, peers play a substantial role in legitimizing the path taken and system integration amongst each organization.

43 Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1976), 101-102.

44 John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business Review, 1996) 9, 72.

45 Alexander Ross, "The Long View of Leadership," *Canadian Business Magazine*, http://www.candiancentre.com/canbross.htm, visited on 4 Dec 2006.

46 Double negative used for emphasis.

47 Jim Collins, *Good to Great* (New York: HarperCollins Publishing Inc., 2001), 21.

48 Jacobs, 3.

49 This paper briefly mentioned this concept earlier from a quote in FM 22-103.

50 This paper briefly mentioned this concept earlier from a quote from FM 22-100.

51 Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline* (New York: Currency Doubleday, 1990), 360.

52 Shambach, 56.

53 Colonel Jiyul Kim, e-mail message to author, 19 October 2006.

54 Richard D. Lewis, *When Cultures Collide*, 3rd ed (Boston: Nicholas Brealey International, 2006), 581.